

LINCOLN: AN APPRECIATION

AN ADDRESS

by

JUDGE CHARLES KRICHBAUM

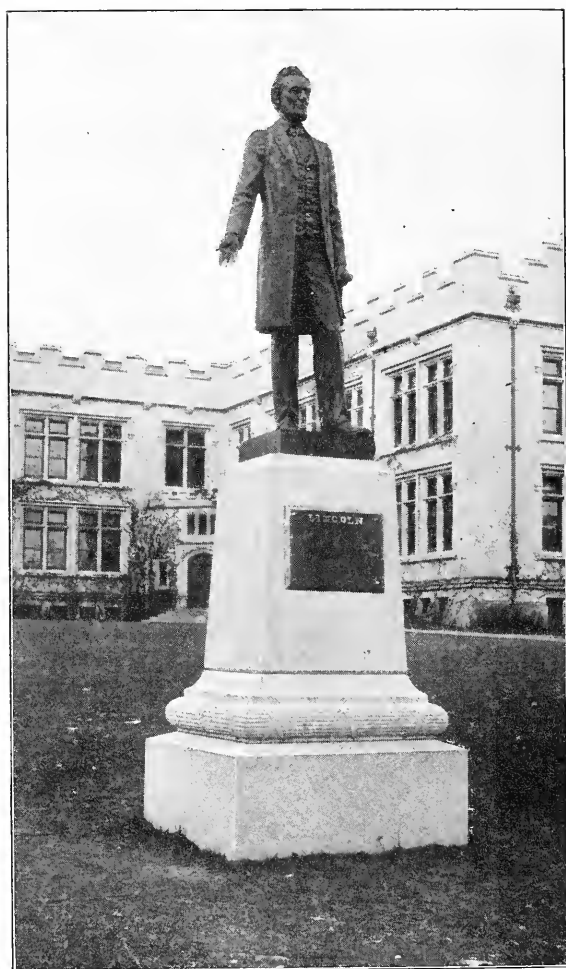
CANTON, OHIO

On occasion of the unveiling of the Lincoln Statue
on the campus of

The College of Wooster

October 1, 1915

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
The Institute of Museum and Library Services through an Indiana State Library LSTA Grant



LINCOLN: AN APPRECIATION

CHARLES KRICHBAUM, A. M., Canton, O.

[An address delivered before the College of Wooster, on the occasion of the dedication of the bronze statue of Lincoln, presented by James Mullins, Oct. 1, 1915.]

Students of The College of Wooster,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I have presumed on your abiding interest and attention; for indeed any man might well hesitate to talk about Abraham Lincoln did he not know that his efforts would be enriched by the sympathy and loving interest of his hearers for his theme.

It is my sincere wish that we, all of us, may be oblivious of ourselves that Abraham Lincoln only may be exalted and re-created and may be, for the time being, in undisturbed possession of the sanctuary of our minds and hearts.

There are exigencies in private as well as in national life when we are compelled almost to say

"Death takes us by surprise,
And stays our hurrying feet,
The great design unfinished lies,
Our lives are incomplete."

Then as time lifts her dark mantle and calamity is turned into blessing, death into life, an abiding faith possesses us us to declare of a truth,—

"When a great man dies,
For years beyond our ken,
The light he leaves behind lies,
Upon the paths of men."

Fifty years up the valley of the sixty centuries stands, brightly glorious, the figure of Abraham Lincoln like a star on the stretched forefinger of all time, shining across the paths of men and nations. A half century's distance lends a fine enchantment to the view, and the perspective in the clear air of history, cleansed by criticism, is perfect; the picture faithfully just, broadly truthful and crammed with foodful meaning.

Look on that picture there with its appurtenances of bloody war. Many remember it, for it was but yesterday. See, how, in the white light of a human progress, that wondrous face, with its sweet serenity and sadness, talks the eloquent beauty of heroic service and sacrifice for country and human kind. In Abraham Lincoln there stands condensed and symbolized, all the patriotism of that historic period. When first he stood there he was not illumined and glorified to human vision as now,—in the “dead vast and middle” of our country's night he stood there bravely up. The fate of the last great experiment of republican institutions hung in the balance, alternate hope and despair in every breast. Conscience and judgment did quarrel in many noble natures. The ligaments of party loyalty did stretch and strain and tear with the wrestling love of freedom and union. Above the noisy babble and gibber of public opinion was heard the owl hoot of European meddling like an ugly omen of impending national death. With hushed breath all the world wondered, till anon—

“Red battle stamped his foot
And nations felt the shock.”

Within the circle of this mad dance of death stood the plain, the simple, the brave and conservative Abraham Lincoln, pouring his best service like oil on that angry sea of mortal trouble.

You all do know the sequel, how the angry tide of that sea of rebellion rose high and awful, then went down fitfully but surely and how at last the wild waves kissed over Lincoln, and how far from that moment peace, white winged and angel-like settled over our land. To-day we are a new generation, unprejudiced by the passions of that war, come in the sober season of fair well-ordered days amid the growing duties of the present, accentuated by the most stupendous and useless war the world has ever seen; on the very fore-front of civilization, in the best years of national manhood, to memorialize—what? A great man! Because, to quote Emerson—"The world is upheld by the veracity of great men; they make the earth wholesome." We are here to perpetuate the wholesome personality of Abraham Lincoln, to idealize and canonize him in our hearts, to erect his heroic figure in bronze as a memorial forever, in order that he may be woven into the fabric of the lives of the young men and women who shall come into and go from our beloved College.

It is proposed to speak truly of, and show you, Abraham Lincoln once more; not the history of that period, but the veritable man Lincoln. The world knows his history, all that he did we know, but what he was in himself we can never fully know; yet the study and analysis of his character will always be the realm of loving research and perpetual discovery. It is an ideal pleasure to transfer one's self, in imagination, into the domain of his ruggedly noble nature and be a witness there to the divine miracle of how this "civic flower" of Republic planting grew and expanded under the guidance of nature; how the ideas of right and truth and justice and humor with its perfumed sparkle and the love for the down

trodden of every race expanded and unfolded in him their ordered and eternal beauty. Would that we could make our inquiry as original as his character and genius.

Carl Schurz in his most admirable analysis of Lincoln says—"No American can study the character and career of Abraham Lincoln without being carried away by sentimental emotions." This address today must of necessity appeal to your emotions quite as much as to your reason; obviously so, because Abraham Lincoln was himself a great sentimentalist. For myself, I may say in passing that I believe in sentiment, and as Henry Ward Beecher would say—"I believe in it like thunder." For be it said according to Ruskin—"These high moods and temperaments of the mind and soul are after all only a higher and loftier kind of thinking."

The only way to reach the character of a great man is to reason from his achievements back to the source—that is to say, the facts of history must explain the man, and in this regard we are most fortunate. Never indeed was a man tried like Lincoln by slander and ridicule, most keen and searching, by exigencies of prodigious compass, by environment, at first narrow and trying, then broad and boundless.

There are now no secrets as to his private or public life—every nook and crevice of that career has been explored and recorded, every door stands ajar. The world knows all that befell, and it is a delightful and wholesome work to reason out and re-create the wondrous man that stands behind this great array of historic facts. His place, in the sober, serious judgment of mankind, is fixed and immortal. Indeed, it makes a man feel like apologizing and asking himself the question—will it do to say anything further about Abraham Lin-

coln? And yet on reflection one cannot bring back Lincoln too often, nor reason too strongly as to his virtues nor urge too forcibly his shining example.

True, we cannot change the verdict of history, we cannot exalt him as perfect, nor do we desire to; nevertheless, to know him thoroly is to be baptized in patriotism and in love for man and God, and one does well to remember always that the world's work has never been done by ideally perfect men since the day of the great Nazarene.

Abraham Lincoln's personality cannot help but be refreshing in all great national crises; and particularly in this day of grim visaged war, a veritable world crisis momentous and awful, it is well to set the flaming jewel of an ideal statesman and citizen, simple, brave, honest, loving,—in the heart and mind of the ambitious young man and woman that it may light the judgment, kindle the conscience and bring forgotten truth into the purposes and deeds of men. If the times demand that we rise above partisan and religious prejudice, personal interest, racial Chauvinism, then surely it is profitable to study and re-create in our minds the life of the man of all men who knew no interest but his country's as related to the fate and welfare of mankind. To those of us rightly constituted, it is well to turn from trying times of peace to that still more trying time of war, for it is thither I must lead you to give you a real glimpse of Lincoln.

A half century ago there were times of which the young manhood and womanhood of today have no adequate idea or conception. To paraphrase the language of the Master, our country had a baptism of fire to be baptised with and how it was straitened till it was accomplished. For were not fathers

set against sons, and sons against fathers, mothers against daughters and daughters against mothers, neighbor against neighbor and friend against friend, state against state.

"I am come to send fire on the earth and what will I if it be already kindled?" said Christ in the beginning of his earthly ministry. The fire of righteousness and indignation designed to destroy a world-wide shame, kindled in the heart of John Brown, William Lloyd Garrison, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Henry Ward Beecher, George William Curtis, James Russell Lowell, John G. Whittier, Wendell Phillips, Ralph Waldo Emerson and in millions of common lowly hearts. When Lincoln came it was already burning and he could well speak the language of the Master, "and what will I, if it be already burning?"

The dead conservatism of vested property in humanity under the guise of holy tradition rose in mistaken, misdirected enthusiasm and sincerity to quench it, but Christ in the hearts of men, Lord of Justice and humanity, said "I come not to bring peace but division." Aye, division, in the household of Washington, Hamilton, Jefferson, Franklin, Madison and Jay.

He came in the might of love, of righteousness, not to bring peace, but a sword, in order, as we now perceive, that we might have a more lasting peace, a more perfect union.

Was that dreadful war the hand of God in the affairs of men? I do not pause for an answer. I only know that fifty years ago there was the beat of the alarming drum and the fife's shrill clarion. There were sudden partings of those who never before were parted. Deep strong feelings moved human hearts never before touched. The bonds of affection between lovers and between mothers and their sons, between sisters and brothers, grew stronger and tenser, and then came

a still small voice saying in gentle affectionate whispers, as love-sick Hamlet said to Ophelia—"Go, go, go," and they did go; from every state, county, township, school district and village, did they go, tho "battle's magnificently stern array" stood out in the dim distance.

In the central seat of the dread epoch, in the midst of that fierce whirlwind of civil war, than which can come "no devil more damned in evils" to blight and curse a nation's life, that, you will say, was no place for a "holiday magistrate," but the dread eminence for a born ruler of men and a veritable king of affairs. Such a man the place demanded. God in his providence had raised up just such a man. He gave us Abraham Lincoln, and in giving him to us he set the seal of approbation on republican institutions.

By inquiry into the nature and method of his training and his origin we shall aptly see how God argued on the side of the republic. With truth and all thankfulness be it said, that the sublime argument for the perpetuity of republican institutions is that in the hour of its supreme peril it was guided to a more perfect union by one of the humblest and most original of its people. For Abraham Lincoln was, to quote his own language, of "the plain common folk;" he was so completely plebeian that not a tradition of aristocracy, or wealth, or culture clung to him. Says Walt Whitman, "Lincoln was far more western than Washington, original, essentially nonconventional."

And says one of the first Americans really to appreciate the riches of the character of Lincoln, "We may be glad that in our true war for independence which is to free us forever from the old world, we had at the head of our affairs a man whom America made as God made Adam, out of the very earth, unancestried, unprivileged, unknown, to show us how

much truth, how much magnanimity and how much state-craft await the call of opportunity in simple manhood, when it believes in the justice of God and the worth of men."

I dare say never was man prepared and educated for a great and difficult eminence, like Lincoln. He was truly the child of the forest; he began a pioneer; face to face with nature he learned the lesson of an intimate Divinity. He had an original relation with the universe, his thoughts and education were not second-hand, they came fresh from God. He was in a high sense the pupil and lover of the "uncontained and immortal beauty" of nature, and that beauty of nature shone in and reflected from his heart in his every thought and action, crystalizing into truth and justice and freedom and liberty to every being who lives and loves and laughs and hopes and prays. To this end he worked with his own hands,—and a hand it was to grasp the world with,—walked with his own feet, thought with his own mind, saw with his own eyes and heard with his own ears. Nothing was second-hand or pretended with him; his sense of justice was original and thus could not help finding out the weak and downtrodden of all this world. He was schooled in the hard battles of necessity, and adversity and trial only deepened and sweetened his nature. Hence with years of heroic struggle came the wisdom that he dispensed with a master's hand in the times of civil war.

I am convinced that a study of the method of Lincoln's education would reveal the whole philosophy of pedagogy. All of Lincoln's knowledge was transformed into power, into life. He had no superfluous knowledge, it was all a part of his personality. He studied mainly the literature of power, (as DeQuincy defines it,) the Bible, Shakespeare, Pilgrim's

Progress. He was almost a man of one book. He went to the Bibles of American politics, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. He knew both as the Jew knows the tables of the Law. He accepted no commentary, no construction suited or adapted to vested property rights in human flesh. From this standpoint he criticized the decision of the Supreme Court in the Dred Scot case with the same directness with reference to the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence as Christ did the rulings of the chief priest and the scribes as to their construction of the fundamental Law of God. "The King can do no wrong"—*a fortiori* the Constitution could not run counter to the Declaration. This he did, I am sure, out of the profound sense of right and truth that rose unconsciously out of his soul, as Shakespeare's poetic wisdom ebbed unconsciously up out of the deep, overflowing wells of truth in his wondrous soul. He wore the Declaration and the Constitution as the cloak and garment of his official life and the New Commandment of Christ as the garment of his daily life. "The elements were so mixed in him that Nature might stand up and say to all the world. This is a man." He was one of "nature's noblemen;" he took on all her divine impressions, until he knew by intuition the direction of things. He was a man.

"A stalwart man,
Limbed like the old heroic breeds
Who stood self poised on manhood's solid earth,
Not forced to give excuses for his birth."

"For him her old-world molds aside did throw,
And choosing sweet clay from the breast
Of the unexhausted West,
With stuff untainted shaped a hero new,
Wise, steadfast in the strength of God, and true;
One whose meek flock the people joyed to be,
Not lured by any cheat of birth,

But by his clear grained human worth
And brave old wisdom of sincerity;
His was no lonely peak of mind
Thrusting to thin air our cloudy bars,
A sea-mark now lost in vapors blind;
Broad prairies rather, genial, level lined,
Fruitful and friendly for all human kind,
Yet also nigh to heaven and loved of all the stars.
Nothing of Europe, here.
Here was a type of the true elder race,
And one of Plutarch's men talked with us face to face,
He knew to bide his time
And can his fame abide,
Still patient in his simple faith divine,
Standing like a tower,
Our children shall behold his fame,
The kindly, earnest, brave, farseeing man
Sagacious, patient, dreading praise, not blame,
New birth of our new soil, the first American."

Lincoln was of America, American, and was the most democratic of all her rulers. Jefferson himself was not a firmer believer than Lincoln in the strength and sufficiency of the democratic theory, and Lincoln was a firm believer in the common people; he loved the common folk, "the plain folk," and he was one of them. He was above party and party traditions. His political code combined the best of the federalist and democratic doctrines; he rose like a solid stone cone an hundred cubits above Hamilton's monarchical and aristocratic, and Jefferson's strict constitutional construction and states' rights tendencies, and on the other hand, he espoused with progressive statesmanship the absolute authority and sovereignty of the Federal Government in maintaining the union, and the highest personal liberty of every citizen compatible with the rights of every other man. He believed that the people with proper education in the ethics of liberty and universal freedom, were capable of persistent loyalty and prolonged effort in the maintenance of right. Never was belief

so well founded; what an intelligent patriotism followed this common man of the woods to the glorious consummation of a more lasting union, the world knows; how the battalions of the republic with their swift and gallant tread, answered the call to duty. What silent joy has since crept into all generous hearts both north and south, and what new hope has enveloped our world. This sublime faith in the good sense of the people and in the sovereignty of the Federal Government was with him always—from first to last. On the 21st day of February, 1861, just eleven days preceding his inauguration, in Independence Hall—the metropolis of Liberty—in Philadelphia, on the eve of the great crisis, in language simple and clear he lays down the line of duty he proposed to follow. One day last winter I stood almost alone in this same Independence Hall. I saw there the sacred relics of the Revolution and July 4th, 1776, guarded by the patriotic vigilance of the great commonwealth of Pennsylvania. As I stood among these saintly memories of the Republic, with strange emotions, I saw in my mind's eye the Titan form of Abraham Lincoln as he stood there 50 years ago. It seemed to me that the pictured lips on the wall of this historic hall must have said Amen and Amen, as Abraham Lincoln uttered on that winter day these soulful words:—"I am filled with deep emotions at finding myself standing here in this place, where were collected together the wisdom, the patriotism, the devotion to principle from which sprang the institutions under which we live. All the political sentiments I entertain, have been drawn, so far as I have been able to draw them, from the sentiments which originated in and were given to the world from this hall. I have never had a feeling politically that did not spring from the sentiments embodied in the Declaration of Independence. That sentiment in the Declaration of Independence which

gave liberty not alone to the people of this country, but I hope to the world, for all future time, it was that which gave promise that in due time the weight would be lifted from the shoulders of all men.

Can this country be saved on that basis? If it cannot be saved on that principle it will be truly awful: If this country cannot be saved without giving up that principle, I was about to say, I would rather be assassinated on the spot than surrender it."

Oh, what a sentiment and purpose, what an example was that for an humble citizen about to enter the purgatorial years of civil war! Is it not the bracing voice of another John Knox "Give me my country, or I die." Here on the threshold of duty was faith and courage and conviction and latent power, commensurate with the exigencies and warring forces of the time. It now seems as though his organism was so perfect that the exigency conspired to make him great in a day. Like another Henry V, the courses of his youth promised nothing,—“this untried and unknown man of the west, whom a blind fortune had, as it were, lifted from the crowd to the most difficult and dangerous post of modern times.” What, it was asked, could the country hope from him in this strained condition of affairs? No sooner did his official oath fly up to heaven's high chancery than at “that very moment consideration like an angel, came and whipped the offending Adam out of him, leaving his body a paradise to envelope and contain celestial spirits.” Political and party malice fled his big manly heart, and in the stately dome of his reason sat temperate judgment like a God, as he said these words, (March 4th, 1861): “I take the official oath today with no mental reservations Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people? Is there any

other or equal hope in the world? If the Almighty Ruler of Nations, with his eternal truth and justice, be on your side of the North, or on yours of the South, that truth and that justice will surely prevail by the judgment of this great tribune of the American people. My countrymen, think calmly and well upon this whole subject. Intelligence, patriotism, Christianity and a firm reliance on Him who has never yet forsaken this favored land, are still competent to adjust in the best way all our present difficulties. In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, is the momentous issue of civil war. You have no oath registered in heaven to destroy the government, while I shall have the most solemn one to preserve, protect, and defend it.

We are not enemies, but friends—we must not be enemies; though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection.”

What a noble nature is here poured out in language sweet as Shakespeare.

It will be noticed that in this, the greatest of all his state papers, he went straight with moral and logical gravitation, to the bottom of the sphinx-like riddle that haunted our beloved land. To use a forceful pun, he riddled that riddle with light. He cut the grand old English language into such exquisite pattern that it expressed the unconscious conviction of every patriot in the land.

He put the reason, the justice, the humanity of his country's cause so clearly and simply, so sweetly and forcefully, that it could not be answered, neither in the forum of reason nor in the forum of conscience, and therefore commanded and received the silent assent of the civilized world. It was the leaven that slowly leavened the whole lump of the North, be-

ginning in the best heads and hearts and running steadily down to the masses, and those people who could not understand the reasoning felt its truthfulness in the very marrow of their bones.

It put loyal resolution and a fixed purpose into the heart of every patriot. No one doubted that the riddle had been solved. The star of duty shone brightly and clearly in the patriotic sky, nothing dimmed by doubt or factitious reasoning; that is to say, it put in tangible form for every patriot, the convictions that lay floundering in the realms of his consciousness.

The first inaugural of Abraham Lincoln resulted in a miraculous molding of popular sentiment, and this great man seems to have become the incorporated common sense of the people. To-day this great inaugural reads like the marshaling of all the political wisdom of the ages, fortified by an appeal to the Christianity and humanity of mankind.

His immortal words touched the heart of the people, not with unreasoning passion, not engendering venom and hate, but with a burning faith and courage that took hold of the future, that saw through the smoke of impending battle a diviner peace, a grander country, a new nation,—the gift of God to the whole human race,—no blot upon its escutcheon that the blood of patriots should not have purged and made clean and white.

Everyone felt as if he were being personally addressed by his own brother, and yet by his infinite superior, and suddenly felt himself dominated by his better self.

Permit me to interpolate some of the meaning and argument that lay between the lines of this great Inaugural, for we may well walk back over such intellectual and moral soil. He said—"I take the official oath today with no mental res-

ervations"—and what a thrill of manly courage shot through the North on reading this one sentence. For surely, it was worth a hundred thousand men to know that our great leader saw clearly and distinctly his duty.

He said, "Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people? And it seems as if Jefferson and Madison and Jackson must have answered "Why?" Vox populi vox Dei. "You of the South and you of the North professed this belief since the founding of our institutions. Is there any other or equal hope in the world?"

The political wisdom of the ages said, No, it is the only hope, it is the palladium of Democratic and Republican institutions.

"If the Almighty Ruler of the Universe with his eternal truth, be on your side of the North, or on yours of the South, that truth and that justice will surely prevail by the judgment of this tribunal of the American people." From the days of the Gracchi to the days of Washington the common people have been on the side of truth.

"My countrymen,"—that is to say, in my heart there is no malice, nor do I engender malice in the North against the South. "My countrymen, think calmly and well upon this whole subject." That is to say,—Whatsoever things are true,—and I have spoken truth,—and whatsoever things are honest—and I have spoken honestly and sincerely the best statement of my heart and that of my loyal countrymen,—and whatsoever things are just,—and I have spoken of the justice of God and man;—whatsoever things are pure and lovely and of good report, and if there be any virtue in the Declaration and Constitution and the institutions of our fathers, my countrymen, I say "think calmly and well on this whole subject."

"Intelligence,"—and you have it in abundance North and South. "Patriotism"—it is the inheritance of Virginia, South Carolina,—the crown and ornament of your Revolutionary history. "Christianity,"—it was the passion for the free exercise of it that peopled a wilderness with the pioneers of Christ. Calvinistic New England, Quaker Pennsylvania, Cavaliers of Virginia, Lord Baltimore of Maryland, all bowed and prayed to Christ, the Author of the same Christianity. "And a firm reliance on him who has never yet forsaken this favored land is still competent to adjust in the best way all our present difficulties."

Such an appeal one would think would have made even the stones to cry out against disunion and bloodshed. Oh, blinded, misguided enthusiasm, to post with dexterity against such pleadings on to the maelstrom of rebellion. "In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, is the momentous issue of the civil war. You have no oath registered in heaven to destroy the government, while I shall have the most solemn one to preserve, protect and defend it." Here I stand,—God help me,—like another Luther, I can do nothing else; not because I am your enemy, but because I am the emissary of God and His eternal, inviolate justice. "We are not enemies but friends." Even though you rebel I will still in the name of God cover your overthrow and your defeat with the mantle of Christian charity. Truly, in this great paper addressed to a short-sighted humanity, the charity, the chivalric courage, the manhood, the Christianity of Lincoln shines like the bright consummate star in our American heavens.

Lincoln was naturally religious. He was saturated with Bible literature. It was absorbed by him as a sponge absorbs water. His great speeches have the structural rhythm and ring of Biblical and poetic language.

"Fondly do we hope,
Fervently do we pray,
That this scourge of war
May speedily pass away,"

is poetry.

The Gettysburg speech is as near an imitation of Biblical style as can be found. Not only has it the Biblical form but the substance of it is Biblical and Christian to the core. His Christianity was not the Christianity of any church, for he refused to be bound by any church that he knew of. But I am convinced that his Christianity was the Christianity of Christ. He said that the reason he had never joined the church was that he did not like the long complicated statements of Christian doctrines which characterized the confessions of the churches. He said—"When any church will inscribe over its altar, as its sole qualification for membership, the Savior's condensed statement of the substance of both law and Gospel 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself,' that church will I join with all my heart and soul."

He made speeches to Sunday schools and was a charming entertainer of children and indeed practiced the rules of Christianity embodied in the above confession of his faith inflexibly in his daily life. He said to Joshua Speed about a year before his assassination—"I am profitably engaged in reading the Bible. Take all of this book upon reason that you can, and the balance on faith, and you will live and die a better man."

At another time in supreme peril he said, "I know that the Lord is always on the side of the right; but it is my constant anxiety and prayer that I and this nation should be on the Lord's side." That he lived in constant communion with

God is proved by many vows he made to God. Just before he issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which was shortly after the battle of Antietam, he said to his cabinet, "The time for the enunciation of the Emancipation Proclamation can no longer be delayed. Public sentiment will sustain it, and I have promised God that I will do it."

"I made a solemn vow," he said to Chase, "before God, that if Gen. Lee were driven back from Maryland I would crown the result by declaration of freedom to the slaves."

Another instance touching and beautiful: Gen. Sickles lost a leg at Gettysburg. He was taken to Washington, Sunday July 5th. President Lincoln called on him and stayed an hour or more. It is related that Gen. Sickles asked him if he was anxious during the Gettysburg campaign? He said no, he was not; that he had no fears but some of his cabinet had. Gen. Sickles pressed him to know why he had no fears, and seemed curious about it. The President hesitated but finally said, "Well, I will tell you how it was. In the pinch of your campaign up there, when everybody seemed panic stricken and nobody could tell what was going to happen, oppressed by the gravity of our affairs, I went into my room one day and locked the door, and got down on my knees before Almighty God and prayed to him mightily for victory at Gettysburg. I told him this was his war and our cause was his cause, but that we couldn't stand another Fredericksburg or Chancellorsville. And then and there I made a solemn vow to Almighty God that if He would stand by our boys at Gettysburg I would stand by Him. And He did and I will, and after that I don't know how it was and I can't explain it, but soon a sweet comfort crept into my soul that things would go all right at Gettysburg, and that is why I had no fears

about you." It is related by Gen. Rushing, who heard him say these words, that he said this solemnly and pathetically, and that both he and Gen. Sickles were deeply touched.

To Mrs. Bixley of Massachusetts who had lost five sons in the war, he wrote,

"I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic your sons died to save. I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement and leave you only the cherished memory of the lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom."

It is impossible to analyze the character of Lincoln, says McCullough, so rare and seemingly incongruous were its combinations. The phases and sides of his nature are "numerous as autumnal leaves in Vallombrosa." He may be called the myriad minded statesman of the Republic, for what rim of human experience does he not touch. In his ancestry he united all the sections. Puritan New England, Quaker Pennsylvania, Virginia and Kentucky were blended in the stock whence he came. Born in the forest, orphan at an early age, common laborer, boatman, merchant, legislator, lawyer, statesman, he was deeply read in books, but more deeply read in things and human experience; well acquainted with the needs of men, he was susceptible to all the generous feelings of human nature; deeply read in the Bible, far beyond most men, and a student of Shakespeare all his days. Making no pretensions, he ranks as among the greatest of orators, and holds an immortal place in English literature. Moreover, he was a humorist of the highest order. A side of his char-

acter not yet understood, and in his day much misunderstood, but a quality, nevertheless, that would alone entitle him to distinction above most of his countrymen.

If humor meant only laughter, Lincoln's humor would be empty. But measured by Thackeray's definition, it is one of the chief forces of life. In his introduction to *English Humorists* Thackeray says—"The Humorist appeals to a great number of other faculties besides our mere sense of ridicule. The humorist professes to awaken and direct your love, your pity, your kindness, your scorn for untruth, pretension, imposture, your tenderness for the weak, the poor, the oppressed, the unhappy; to the best of his means and ability he comments upon all the ordinary actions and passions of life almost. He takes upon himself to be the week-day preacher, so to speak. Accordingly as he finds and speaks and feels the truth best, we regard him, esteem him, sometimes love him."

Is not this the faithful transcript of Lincoln's humor; did his joke not always point a moral or thrust at "untruth, imposture, pretension." Do not his words, sober or humorous, yea, his life, tend to "awaken your tenderness for the weak, the poor, the oppressed," and was it not, too, this same humorous-story-telling, truth-and-fault illustrating man, that could not sleep when he knew a soldier was condemned to death? This, I take it, is the true philosophy and explanation of the sad, wondrous face, and that apparent flippancy, so distasteful to the arrogant Stanton, the dignified Chase, and the cultured Seward.

Lincoln was in the highest sense a genius, pristine and original, and his character, the more it is studied, expands like Shakespeare. Imagine if you can, some future Baconian giving his laurels to Seward or Stanton or Everett, because

he was not educated at Harvard and because he was not versed in the languages long dead, and because he did not know the mass of law from Ulpian to Story, when he was shined on by all the stars of heaven and educated in the great school of dread necessity and experience,—the bright consummate flower of republican institutions.

I cannot forbear to quote Mr. Lowell's words on Lincoln, in his able defense of democracy when Minister to England: "But Democracies have likewise their finer instincts. I have seen the wisest statesman, and most pregnant speaker of our generation—a man of humble birth and ungainly manners, of little culture beyond what his own genius supplies, become more absolute in power than any monarch of modern times, through the reverence of his own countrymen for his honesty, his wisdom, his sincerity, his faith in God and man, and the nobly humane simplicity of his character. Institutions that could breed such men as Lincoln and Emerson had surely some energy for good."

Lincoln was a citizen of the majestic world. He was a great reformer, but unlike most reformers, he was no radical; on the contrary, he was the greatest conservative since Edmund Burke. His genius was intuitive; he took the divine direction of things. He trusted God more than he trusted men and himself, and never reached to pluck the fruit of reform until it was richly ripe and luscious, and when he did reach, it fell as by magic into his big, brawny hand, as if love-sick for the touch of a statesman.

His conservatism was so equable that it always justified him in the reason and judgment of the people. He left the shaping of his policy to events. He spake with fireside plain-

ness to the people, and with reason always answered them. He knew that the people could think—he was respectfully frank, and won the love and judgment of his people irrespective of party.

It has been said that his policy was the policy of public opinion, based on adequate discussion.

“He always addressed the intelligence of men, never their passions, their prejudice, their ignorance,” and seldom moved until he had behind him the sober sense and judgment of the people.

“He knew the seasons when to take
Occasion by the hand and make
The bounds of freedom wider yet
By shaping that august decree.
Yet kept the State unbroken still,
Broad based upon the peoples' will.
And compassed by the inviolate sea;
No North, no South, no East, no West,
No bond, all free,
And bounded by the inviolate sea.”

But his tragic end—is it not the antipode of Cæsar's?

Lincoln was a “completed benefactor,” he aspired to no crown but that of manhood. When Cæsar fell Anthony said,

“Oh, mighty Caesar! Dost thou lie so low—
Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils
Shrunk to the little measure—Fare thee well.”

When Lincoln fell, kind nature, prophesying, said:

“Cresce;” more in death than yet in
Life thy country shalt thou serve.
All hail!

Anthony said:

“A curse shall light upon the limbs of men;
Domestic fury and fierce civil strife
Shall cumber all the parts of Italy.”

Over Lincoln nature said:

The chains shall fall from off the limbs of men;
Domestic peace and sacred civil right
Shall bless and water all the parts
Of our Columbia.

Anthony said over Caesar:

"Blood and destruction shall be so in use,
And dreadful objects so familiar,
That mothers shall but smile when they behold
Their infants quartered with the hands of war."

Over Lincoln prophetic nature said:

Freedom and justice shall be so in use,
And horrid slavery so rebuked,
That dusky mothers for joy shall weep
When they behold their infants
In their arms made safe
From masters' lash and dreaded market place.

Antony said:

"All pity choked with custom of fell deeds,
And Caesar's spirit ranging for revenge,
With Ate by his side, come hot from hell,
Shall in these confines with a monarch's voice,
Cry 'Havoc' and let slip the dogs of war."

Nature over Lincoln with highest transport said:

Peace, white winged and glorious as the dawn,
Sailing the all entrancing realm of light,
With Lincoln by her side come straight from Heaven,
Shall with angel voice proclaim,

"The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battle field and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, now swell the chorus of the Union, for they are again touched (as in God's plan they surely were to be) by the better angels of our nature."

As we this day unveil in our quadrangle the benign form of Abraham Lincoln, let us hope that its presence there may charm, admonish, enrich and ennoble the virile student life that surges about it. Here may descend upon our boys and girls the benediction of the personal presence of Abraham Lincoln.



